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DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/CACEN AND EUR/SNEC
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SUBJECT: FM OSKANIAN ON ARMENIA'S CURRENT FOREIGN POLICY
PRIORITIES

REF: ANKARA 3032

Classified By: DCM A.F.Godfrey for reason 1.4 (b, d)

Summary

1. (C) On June 2, FM Oskanian briefed Chiefs of Diplomatic Missions resident in Yerevan. He characterized the May 17 Warsaw meeting of Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev as "positive," with a critical step forward, but rejected Azerbaijan's assertion that Armenia had agreed to return all "occupied territories. He lamented what he termed recent steps backward in Armenia-Turkey relations, including the cancellation by the GOT of a conference entitled "Ottoman Armenians " and the formal adoption of section 305 of the new penal code. He discussed his busy travel schedule for the upcoming weeks, including presentation of Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) to NATO and meetings in Washington. End Summary.

Armenia's Plans for UN Reform

2. (C) FM Oskanian's June 2 briefing for the diplomatic corps coincided with the end of the MFA's annual Chiefs of Mission Conference. Oskanian introduced several Armenian Ambassadors who had not yet returned to their posts. The FM said that in addition to the usual internal and logistics issues, UN reform was at the top of the agenda for the conference. Oskanian announced that the MFA had come to a consensus position, which had still to be confirmed by President Kocharian. On Security Council reform, Oskanian supported enlargement of both permanent and non-permanent membership. Oskanian announced that Armenia had committed to supporting Japan, Germany and India for seats on the council, but remained "open for consultations" on the one South American and the two African seats. Armenia remained hesitant on how to expand veto power, said Oskanian; if new Council members were to be granted a veto, Armenia would seek an "overwhelming majority" vote from the General Assembly. On reform of the Human Rights Commission, Armenia would support "upgrading" the HRC to the status of council, but would seek to keep membership at 53 members.

"Critical Steps Forward" With Azerbaijan in Warsaw

3. (C) Oskanian was frank in his description of the May 17 meeting of Presidents Kocharian and Aliyev. While he hailed the meeting as positive and said that a "key, critical step" had been taken, he said that he would not disclose what this step had been. He complained about the public statement about the substance of the Warsaw discussions by FM Mammadyarov, saying that it "did not correspond with reality or with the spirit and letter of the agreement reached." Oskanian rejected the assertion that Armenia had agreed to return all seven occupied territories. Armenia's position remained that at least one of these territories would not be returned and that this territory would assume a different status to maintain a link between Armenia and N-K. Oskanian said that a signal of just how different the Warsaw meeting was from other sessions was when the two presidents called both Foreign Ministers in following their one-on-one and gave them instructions -- in the presence of the Minsk Group co-chairs -- on how to prepare for their own next session. Oskanian said his next meetings with the co-chairs would be on June 8 in Vienna (without FM Mammadyarov) and then -- he hoped -- on June 18 in Paris with his Azerbaijani colleague.

4. (C) When asked whether Armenia thought that the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline would embolden Azerbaijan, Oskanian replied in the negative. In his view, Azerbaijan's options, particularly with regard to the use of force, had been limited. The countries which had invested so heavily in the pipeline would simply not allow action which would damage their investment, Oskanian argued. When asked whether Azerbaijan's election schedule constrained negotiations, Oskanian said that while he "did not rule out a breakthrough" before parliamentary elections, he doubted one would take place. Since such serious compromises would be required from both sides, it would be natural to delay any

painful announcements until after elections.

Relations With Turkey Take Two Steps Back

15. (C) Oskanian said that Armenia's relations with Turkey had taken steps back. "Despite the hype," no meeting had taken place in Warsaw, Oskanian said. He said that after the Warsaw CoE Summit, GOAM officials had heard that Turkey had been waiting for Armenia to make an approach; PM Erdogan had expressed his frustration in public remarks before leaving Warsaw. Oskanian said that he "does not know how to get relations back on the positive track" established by the exchange of letters between PM Erdogan and President Kocharian. Two other events had had an even stronger negative effect on the relationship. First, Oskanian said, was the GOT's cancellation of an academic conference "with the politically correct title of 'Ottoman Armenians During the Decline of the Empire.'" Second was the adoption of section 305 of Turkey's new penal code, which criminalizes the expression of views contrary to State policy on Cyprus and the Armenian massacres.

International Pressure to Move Forward on Democratic Reform

16. (C) Oskanian acknowledged active pressure from International Organizations to move forward on key elements of democratic reform. In the past week, he continued, he had met with the Council of Europe's Venice Commission on the draft changes to Armenia's constitution, with the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on the draft election law and with the Council of Europe's GRECO delegation on corruption. Oskanian said that the meetings had gone well, although there were still issues which are not yet agreed. He admitted that the meetings with the Venice Commission were the most difficult. He expected that a referendum on changes to the constitution would take place in October or November 2005, concurrent with local elections.

FM to Brussels: NATO IPAP and EU New Neighborhood

17. (C) The FM outlined a grueling travel schedule for the coming weeks. On June 8 he expected to meet with the Minsk Group co-chairs in Vienna. On June 9 he would travel to Washington for meetings with the USG. (Oskanian did not announce any specific meetings scheduled.) From Washington he would travel to Beijing for an "official visit" and then would travel to London "for a speech to mark the genocide." (Note: Although the UK Embassy had no information on this subject, the Armenian press reported that Oskanian would deliver an address in the House of Lords. End Note.) From London he would travel to Brussels for two key meetings: first at NATO to present Armenia's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) to the NAC and second with key EU officials to present the draft of Armenia's statement of priorities for the EU "New Neighborhood" program. Finally, he would wind up the trip by meeting with FM Mammadyarov in Paris together with the Minsk Group co-chairs.

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